

United States Arsenal Building (now Porter
Academy President's Residence)
167 Ashley Avenue (Ashley Avenue, Bee, Doughty
and President Streets)
Charleston
Charleston County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-299

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. SC-299

UNITED STATES ARSENAL BUILDING
(NOW PORTER ACADEMY PRESIDENT'S RESIDENCE)HABS
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Address: 167 Ashley Avenue (Ashley Avenue, Bee, Doughty and President Streets), Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina.

Present Owner: Medical College of South Carolina, 16 Lucas Street, Charleston, South Carolina.

Present Occupant: Porter Academy.

Present Use: Residential.

Brief Statement of Significance: A mid 19th century military building, largely altered.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: United States Government; granted to trustees of the Holy Communion Church Institute by joint resolution of Congress, December 19, 1879.
Name changed to Porter Academy in 1886.
Sold to Medical College of South Carolina, August 30, 1963.
2. Date of erection: About 1844.
3. Notes on original plan and construction of building: Originally of a single story in height.[physical evidence].
4. Notes on known alterations and additions: The second story was added, probably during the 19th century [physical evidence]. The physical history of this building is by no means clear, except for changes in recent years, which include the enclosure of the north piazza and refinishing [interview with Mrs. W. L. Willis, wife of the President, and Registrar of Porter Academy on August 29, 1963].

- B. Sources of Information: A. Toomer Porter, Led On, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1898).
News and Courier, Charleston, South Carolina, August 31, 1963.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: A former arsenal building, altered in the 19th century into dwellings.
2. Condition of fabric: Sound. Finish good in those portions recently refinished.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Number of stories and bays, over-all dimensions, layout: two stories; 5 x 12 bays; about 76' long by 34' deep; rectangular with recessed piazza.
2. Foundations: Low.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: Red brick, American bond (headers every fourth course), pilaster strips each bay with wide flush band interrupting them at second-floor level.
4. Structural system, framing: Brick bearing exterior walls, frame partitions, wooden floor and roof system.
5. Porches: Six-bay double-tiered wooden piazza on south side. Square paneled Doric piers. Railings each floor, of wood with turned double balusters. Paneled ceiling. (A similar piazza on the north side has been enclosed in recent years.)
6. Chimneys: Brick, on main ridge. One is central, the others at the junctions with ridges of the end pavilions.
7. Openings: Openings have been altered extensively; some blocked, others opened, doors and windows interchanged. Typical windows have flat brick arches, wooden sills, double-hung sash, six-over-six lights, casing inside plain brick opening.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: H-shaped roof plan, hipped, covered with modern composition shingles.
 - b. Cornice: Molded wooden cornice approximately matches the granite cornices on several other arsenal buildings in the group.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: In converting to residential uses, this plan appears to have been altered more than once. It is divided transversely in the center; the east half (described here) forms a semidetached dwelling, and the west half two apartments.
Plan of east half; entrance-stair hall, with one main room on the west (interior) side and two main rooms on the east side (filling out the end pavilion). The piazza is recessed on the south side; a kitchen occupies the (enclosed) piazza area on the north side. First-floor ceiling height approximately 14'-2"; second-floor ceiling about 12'.
2. Stairways: Open well, open string, large turned newel, balusters of rectangular section.
3. Flooring: Longleaf yellow pine boards, varying widths 4" to 6-1/2". Recently refinished.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Painted plaster, with a large cove, about 2'-6".
5. Doors: Four molded panels. Those on the second story have raised panels.
6. Decorative features and trim: Wide wood architrave trim on door and window openings; those on second floor are not so wide. High molded wooden base.
7. Notable hardware: Two cast-iron butts per door.
8. Heating: Originally heated by fireplaces in main rooms; some have been closed. Chimney breasts project. One marble mantel on second floor, two wooden mantels with pilasters on first floor; their design is simple, representative of a type often found inside so-called Greek Revival houses.

- D. Site: This building faces south toward the main central driveway of the group of buildings; it is located about 100' east of the main Arsenal Building.

Prepared by Harley J. McKee, Architect
National Park Service
August 1963.